

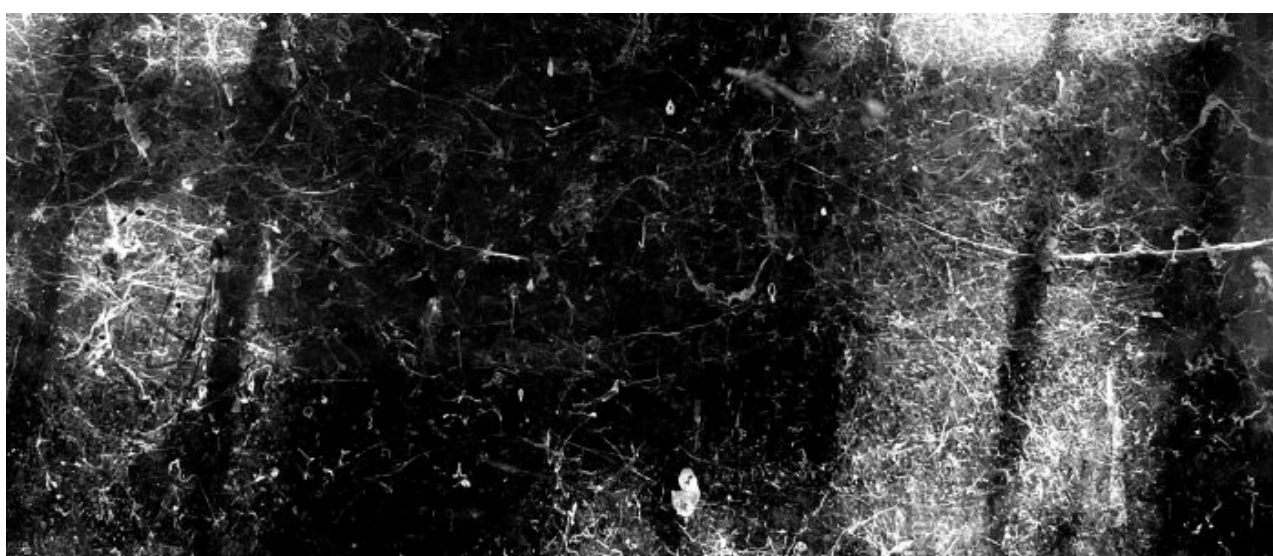
## Editorial: Ecologies

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# Editorial: Ecologies

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This issue of *Hyphen Journal* is about matters of ecology – biological, cosmological, philosophical, ethical matters, as well as a vibrant materialism in which violent separations between thought and matter, humans and ‘nature’, civilisation and its others are dissolved so that a tangled web of becomings and beings-with can emerge into view from the wreckage wrought by centuries of illusions of human, rational, colonial, capitalist mastery. In the call for submissions that set in motion the gestation of this volume, Guattari’s (1989/2000) influential proposal that ecology needs to be understood as playing out transversally across the psychological, the social and the environmental has provided an important reference point. And while the twentieth century, in the vein of Michel Foucault’s (1998: 343) well-known quip,<sup>1</sup> might have been ‘known as Deleuzian’, the opening decades of the twenty-first could be said to have been taking a decidedly Guattarian turn, with the latter’s decidedly ecological thought, informed by his practice as both psychoanalyst and activist, speaking to the urgencies of the present moment.

Having said this, rather than seeking to establish a new theoretical canon, the more interesting proposal might be to view Guattari’s ecosophy as something of a portal, a figure that mirrors how Arundhati Roy (2020) has discussed the Covid-19 pandemic as an opening, a passage to a world whose contours are not yet clear, but which calls for imagination and determination to fight for a future worth living in. Following this line of thought, Guattari’s ecosophy and the ways in which it has re-emerged as a salient concern in critical discourse could be seen as an opening, in fact one of many that have proliferated in recent years in

response to the accelerating global accumulation of ecological crises. These are portals through which many incongruous currents swarm, congregate and interlace, currents that encompass radically different practices, schools of thought, positions, histories, cosmologies, all of which are in some ways concerned with questions of how to live ecologically. This issue of *Hyphen Journal* seeks to provide a platform on and through which encounters and interferences between some of these can play out, guided by the journal's ethos of facilitating a sociality between research and practice that can, we hope, contribute to the kinds of proposals for non-destructive modes of being in and with the world that are needed today.

One such proposal is put forward in Manuela Johanna Covini's 'The New Village Project – I have to change my life, an experience', an online environment that invites its visitors into a rich and intimate tapestry made up of notes, observations, short video and audio clips, quotations, historical documentation and much more. The project reflects on the artist's decision to move to a sparsely populated rural community outside Berlin, and the tangled paths through its network of affiliations between everyday practice, landscape, history and political critique give rise to a complex topography full of verdant passages and surprise clearings in the undergrowth. This is a topography in which issues such as the individualised modes of being in the world demanded by late neoliberalism are ungrounded as much through archaeological excavations of intellectual histories as through the question of what it means to live a good, and thus ecological, life at the present conjecture.

Revisiting the thought that has informed the germination of this issue, Hanjo Berressem's contribution, 'Squaring ecology: Félix Guattari's schizoanalytic ecogram...', explores Guattari's lesser-known book *Schizoanalytic Cartographies* (1989/2013). Berressem situates the latter text as something of a missing link between Guattari's more renowned *The Three Ecologies* (1989/2000) and *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-aesthetic Paradigm* (1992/1995). While *Schizoanalytic Cartographies* is a somewhat difficult text strewn with a proliferation of abstract diagrams, Berressem reads the book as laying out a manual for how to think, not about ecology, but ecologically. In seeking to clear paths for those who might find the structure of the book forbidding, Berressem has opted to eschew writing another text about the original text. Instead, he has devised a flip book in which words and images associate and overlap in playful graphical arrangements that give rise to a 'concrete philosophy', with echoes of concrete poetry. At the same time, a web of links traces a multitude of possible paths through the piece, recalling the figure of the rhizome that is a major reference point in Guattarian and Deleuzian thought.

An alternative kind of extended web is spun by Caio Silva and Raylanne Leal in 'Dancing Over the Bones of the Dead', which is the title of both a short video and a text that expands outwards from the visual into a realm that crosses fictional, reflexive and theoretical modes. 'Dancing Over the Bones of the Dead' is concerned with the imminent end of the world and how to postpone it, and the ways in which art and storytelling can contribute to envisioning a world that can change its trajectory from the slide towards catastrophe that in many ways seems unavoidable. In the video, set in a forest landscape, an abundance of references echoes from every word that is spoken in the voiceover, and these are expanded in the text into a panoply of the Terran resistance to western rationality and its destructive exceptionalism. In the Terran forest evoked here, the undergrowth is populated by indigenous thinkers Davi Kopenawa and Ailton Krenak, novelists Namwali Serpell and Olga Tokarczuk, filmmakers Jim Jarmusch and Apitchapong Weerasethakul, theorists Donna Haraway and Silvia Federici, and many others.

In Ana V. Fleming's 'Strange and Sessile Liveliness: Vegetal Possibility in Art, Speculative Fiction and

Philosophy' a weave of florid strands of thought overgrows human-centric notions of intelligence through an appeal to plant being and cognition. With reference to her practice as a painter of biomorphic compositions in which vegetal forms merge into tubular, mechanical as well as insect-like and mineral shapes, Fleming develops the notion of the 'vegetal-weird'. This plays on how plants' 'apparent lack of interiority' (Meeker and Szabari 2019: 15) comes up against their evident abilities to process and respond to inputs from their environments, thereby confounding western notions of mastery and rationalism inherited from the Enlightenment. As Fleming goes on to show, the vegetal-weird has long been germinating in a subterranean lineage that can be traced to the grotesque in Renaissance art, bursting into the open in speculative fiction and the multispecies thinking of Donna Haraway and others. Connecting these threads, Fleming sees in thinking-with plants the possibility for a realignment between human activities and more-than-human ecologies.

Currents whose flows corrode problematic and ultimately violent notions of human mastery also burst forth in Andrew Goodman's text 'Undoing the Human: \*Wild\* Art and a Poetics of Ecology'. Goodman's point of departure is a 1957 chemical computing experiment by scientists-artists-theorists Gordon Pask and Stafford Beer, in which a series of trays filled with ferrous sulphate solution and connected through electrodes spontaneously 'grew an ear', with iron fibrils resonating in response to a microphone that had been added to the system and lowered out of a window to pick up sounds from the street. The indeterminate, self-organising capacity of filaments that emerged in this system leads Goodman to reflect on non-human potentials and becomings via the queering and decolonising of the notion of wildness in the writings of Jack Halberstam and Tavia Nyong'o. This is augmented by Goodman with Karen Barad-inspired wildcards to arrive at a \*wild\* that is open-ended and full of creativity on all levels down to the molecular. The \*wild\* invoked by Goodman gives rise to a shimmering ecology that overflows thermodynamic models of the world in which entropy inevitably leads to stasis. Instead, \*wild\* ecologies engender non-linear complexities, systems that move towards relational emergence which exceeds any notions of bounded individuality or predetermined causality.

The River Taw and its estuary in south-western England become collaborators in Lydia Halcrow's practice that combines walking and making while seeking to overflow human-centred notions of creativity, through material encounters in which thinking-with ecologies is an embodied, sensory practice, with the artist's body entangled in intra-actions with the environs encountered along the walks. In 'Tread Lightly on the Earth Beneath', Halcrow reflects on the work emerging from meetings with and of matters that include earth, water, rust, plastic and other washed-up debris, abandoned ships, the climate, histories, memories, parenthood, pollution and the pace of walking. In Halcrow's practice, these matters leave residues on materials such as paper or metal that are either offered to the play of the elements or activated as recording devices of sorts to create what she terms 'matter maps' made collaboratively with the Taw. In the text describing these processes, the artist's practice gradually unfolds as closely entangled with a materiality of traces and residues, with an openness towards the vibrancy of matter across human and more-than-human bodies, and with experimental exploration of place through making.

Sara Melissa Gallego Quiroz's immersive video *Indora* also is concerned with place, in this case the Colombian rainforests that are crucial sites of biodiversity and integral to the country's water supply. As Gallego Quiroz notes in her text '*Indora: an Audiovisual Short for Digital Dome*', despite government efforts, deforestation continues apace. The question of how to communicate such pressing issues as forest, habitat and species loss remains as urgent as ever, particularly considering that the scale of the destruction

wrought exceeds what is graspable through human cognition. With *Indora*, the artist has revisited her own enchanting childhood experience of encountering the vastness of the virtual sky in a planetarium, by creating a piece made for large-scale planetarium projection. *Indora* fills the dome with immersive, collaged imagery that speaks to concerns with the gradual disappearance of ecosystems through human action. Through this work, Gallego Quiroz seeks to activate the pedagogical potential of dome projection, which can make the vastness of issues such as habitat destruction and species extinction sensible through immersive experience.

An immersive space of a different kind is created in the work of Sue Goldschmidt. “Strange Fits of Passion” – Narrational ecologies of *In the House of Ephra and Bahmanduch*’ discusses the artist’s ceramics practice that is based on magic spells found on Aramaic incantation bowls from fifth- to seventh-century Iraq, which were usually buried upside-down in floors and courtyards. The work consists of a series of installations in which clay materiality extends across three spaces variously into floral motifs, suspended ceiling roses, wallpaper that unmoors itself from the surface on which it is installed, and encounters with reeds, roses, herbs and spices. The work inhabits a conceptual cosmology that references creation myths in which humans as well as demons were created out of clay, the adulterous Lilith demon whose sexual voraciousness threatens family life, and the slippages between the psychological, the supernatural, the body and the home. *In the House of Ephra and Bahmanduch* proposes an imaginative archaeology in which buildings can take on human emotions and sicknesses, and spoken word permeates and becomes embodied within the material fabric of dwellings.

Finally, Japhy Wilson’s ‘We Will Be the Immune Herd: Fear and Loathing Under Lockdown’ roams through an urban psycho-scape in a diaristic, psychogeographic account of the first Coronavirus lockdown as seen from Manchester, UK. Reports of panic-buying, deserted streets populated only by marginalised figures, the callous response of the British government, fear of contagion, the classed division of exposure to the virus, and incursions of groups of animals into urban environments drift into feverish dreams that capture the petrified sense of dread and bewilderment that accompanied the onset of the global pandemic. While there have been calls for the incision into the flow of business as usual by the Coronavirus to be mobilised for lasting progressive change, Wilson is less optimistic. With reference to the British government’s unacknowledged but likely initial strategy of seeking to achieve herd immunity by allowing a significant part of the population to be infected, he sees the most likely future to emerge to be that of the ‘immune herd’: guided by a strong desire for things to be as they were before, with added widespread passivity and resignation to the idea that nothing fundamental will ever change.

The Coronavirus pandemic has also in various ways incubated the editing process for this issue of *Hyphen Journal*. Before arriving at the point at which the contributions published here were ready, a multitude of labours has been mobilised, many of which had at various stages to deal with issues such as geographical dispersion, illness experienced personally or by kin, loss, isolation and unpredictable futures. In the process, plans and deadlines shifted more than once, while at the same time keeping up the work on the journal in leaps and spurts has been one way of maintaining a sense of connectedness among the group of editors and contributors. Tending these shoots and blossoms is an ecological practice in its own right, an ongoing, open-ended process of seeking to grow and nurture connections amid uncertainty. In this spirit, Issue 3 of *Hyphen Journal* will keep on proliferating, as a further compendium of fascinating, thought-provoking and challenging contributions is still in the works, awaiting publication in a second instalment. Look out for the season when its branches will be in bloom.

## ENDNOTES

1 Gilles Deleuze (1995: 4) himself, in *Letter to a Harsh Critic*, described Foucault's remark as 'a joke meant to make people who like us laugh, and make everyone else livid'.

## ISSUE 3.1 EDITORIAL COLLECTIVE

Steven Barclay, CAMRI  
Harshavardhan Bhat, Architecture and Cities  
Iram Ghufuran (co-Editor-in-Chief), CREAM  
Sue Goldschmidt, CREAM  
Frankie Hines, English and Creative Writing  
Monika Jaeckel, CREAM (alumni)  
Matthias Kispert (Co-Editor-in-Chief), CREAM (alumni)  
Sarah Niazi, CREAM  
Sam Nightingale, Goldsmiths, University of London  
Renan Porto, Westminster Law School  
Lucy Rogers (Co-Editor-in-Chief), CREAM  
Arne Sjögren, CREAM (alumni)  
James Snazell, CREAM  
Jol Thoms, CREAM (alumni)  
Lennaart Van Oldenborgh, Goldsmiths, University of London

## WEBSITE DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

Oscar Cass-Darweish (web developer)  
Matthias Kispert, CREAM  
Arne Sjögren, CREAM

## PROOFREADING

River Editorial

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## About the author

Matthias Kispert is an artist and researcher with an interest in the intersections of art, politics and activism. He has completed a practice-based PhD at the University of Westminster in 2021, using artistic research methods to investigate precarious work on digital labour platforms. He is a co-founder of *Hyphen Journal*. Alongside his current work, he also has a history as an electronic music composer and performer with the media artist collective D-Fuse, is a lecturer at the University of the Arts London and the University of Westminster, and is convening the Radical Film Network as well as the Committee on Activism for the International Initiative for Promoting Political Economy.